

BeeSweet Lemonade is a sweet deal for the 10-year-old boss

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Mikaila Ulmer, 10, of Austin, Texas, (left) asks contestant Madyson Mitchell, 11, questions while judging the Advocare Best Tasting Lemonade Contest at NorthPark Center in Dallas, Texas, April 25, 2015. Mikaila is a past winner and now owns BeeSweet Lemonade, which is sold in Whole Foods grocery stores. Photo: Ashley Landis/Dallas Morning News/TNS

DALLAS — For a young businesswoman, Mikaila Ulmer has made a pretty sweet deal for herself and her company.

Mikaila, 10, is chief executive of BeeSweet Lemonade, which she started when she was 4 1/2. She got the idea for the company after participating in a children's business competition and a Lemonade Day. The national program teaches children about business by giving them confidence to open their own company.

BeeSweet has been so successful that the fancy grocery store, Whole Foods, is now selling the drink. In March, Mikaila accepted a \$60,000 offer from a businessman on the television show "Shark Tank." In exchange, she gave her investor 25 percent of BeeSweet. "Shark Tank" gives people the chance to get money from wealthy businesspeople for owning part of their companies.

Not bad for any young business, especially one started with a lemonade stand.

Squeezing Business Skills From Lemons

Lemonade Day was created in 2007 by Michael Holthouse. He helped start the Houston nonprofit organization Prepared 4 Life. He was inspired by lessons he taught his young daughter when she set up her first lemonade stand.

Last year, more than 225,000 kids from pre-kindergarten through high school in 35 U.S. cities participated. Nearly 50 cities will take part in Lemonade Day this year. Organizers are hoping eventually for 1 million lemonade stands in 100 cities.

Lemonade Day teaches young people about how to run a business, said Peggy Bessellieu, the executive director of Lemonade Day Greater Dallas. She said it also teaches them about "the value of a dollar and offers skills they need to become successful in all areas of their lives."

For example, the kids have to learn how to determine their costs and budget for making lemonade.

"What I've seen a lot of times when we sit down with these kids, they want to do organic lemons and they want to have fresh raspberries in there," Bessellieu said. Organic lemons are grown without chemicals. They cost more to buy, because farmers grow fewer of them. When the kids figure out the numbers, they realize they would have to charge about \$7 a glass to make a profit, Bessellieu said.

Bee Stings Bring Research

Mikaila started BeeSweet after her family encouraged her to make a product for a children's business competition and Lemonade Day.

Then two important events happened.

First, she got stung by two bees in one week. "I hated the bees," Mikaila said. "I would freak out, but my parents — they made me do some research on the bees and from that research, I found out how incredibly important bees were to our world."

At the same time, her great-grandmother sent Mikaila's family a cookbook. It included a special lemonade recipe.

"I decided to create a product that helped save the bees," Mikaila said. She also wanted to use her great-grandmother's recipe as well.

Mikaila used the original recipe, but changed it to make it her own, said her father, Theo. His official title at his daughter's company is "Chief Worker Bee."

BeeSweet's flavors include mint, iced tea and "Prickly Pear," named after the cactus fruit. A ginger flavor was the idea of her 7-year-old brother Jacob. He is the top salesman at his sister's company.

Give, Save, Spend

Mikaila is the first to admit that she is still learning about money.

Her parents tried to teach her good business sense and good judgment, Theo Ulmer said. They also tried to teach her to help the community. She has had a bank account since she was in kindergarten.

"The three things I do with my money, even before I started with BeeSweet, was I give, save and I spend," Mikaila said. She gives to organizations that help the honeybees or to church. She saves for college. She also spends the money on fun things for herself and others, like arts and crafts supplies and toys.

One of the first lessons Mikaila learned was that to make lemonade, you have to spend money.

"You have to first have some money to start out," Theo Ulmer said. "If you're going to spend \$20, you have to earn at least \$21."

"The \$1 is called a profit," Mikaila added.

Quiz

- 1 Which sentence helps explain why Mikaila was able to accept \$60,000 for her company?
 - (A) In exchange, she gave her investor 25 percent of BeeSweet.
 - (B) BeeSweet has been so successful that the fancy grocery store, Whole Foods, is now selling the drink.
 - (C) In March, Mikaila accepted a \$60,000 offer from a businessman on the television show "Shark Tank."
 - (D) "Shark Tank" gives people the chance to get money from wealthy businesspeople for owning part of their companies.

- 2 Which answer choice accurately characterizes Mikaila's reaction to getting stung by two bees and receiving a cookbook from her great-grandmother?
 - (A) She did some research on bees, found a recipe for lemonade in the cookbook, and ended up creating a lemonade business to prevent bees from stinging children.
 - (B) She did some research on bees, found a recipe for lemonade in the cookbook, and ended up creating a lemonade business to help bees.
 - (C) She decided to enter a lemonade competition on Lemonade Day and ended up inventing a lemonade that would become a famous business.
 - (D) She decided to enter a lemonade competition on Lemonade Day so that she could make a lot of money to support her family and community.

- 3 Which paragraph does the author include in the section "Squeezing Business Skills From Lemons" to explain the origins of Lemonade Day?

- 4 Which is the MOST important method the author uses to develop the idea that Mikaila is still learning about money?
 - (A) providing facts about the history of Lemonade Day
 - (B) describing what inspired Mikaila to start making lemonade
 - (C) interviewing Mikaila in the section "Give, Save, Spend"
 - (D) highlighting Mikaila's successes with her lemonade business